

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
May 14, 2013

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### **National Bike Safety Month Observed in May**

BISMARCK, N.D. – May is Bike Safety Month, a nationwide event observed to highlight the importance of safe bike riding, according to Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, millions of Americans ride bicycles, but less than half wear bicycle helmets. For example, a national survey conducted in 2001-2003 found that only 48 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years wore bicycle helmets when riding. Further, older children were less likely to wear helmets than younger children.

In 2010 in the U.S., 800 bicyclists were killed and an estimated 515,000 sustained bicycle-related injuries that required emergency department care. Roughly half of these cyclists were children and adolescents younger than 20. Annually, 26,000 of these bicycle-related injuries to children and adolescents are traumatic brain injuries treated in emergency departments. According to the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Vital Records, between the years 2007- 2011, seven North Dakotans died in bicycle-related accidents.

Because head injury is the leading cause of death and long-lasting impairments related to bike crashes, the Department of Health urges all bike riders to wear helmets – every time they ride.

“Wearing a helmet is the single most effective thing a person can do to avoid injury and death. That’s why everyone must make wearing a helmet a priority,” said State Health Officer Dr. Terry Dwelle. “Parents should model good bicycle safety by encouraging good riding habits, wearing a helmet and obeying all traffic laws.”

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), nearly 70 percent of all fatal bicycle crashes involve head injuries, yet only about 20-25 percent of all bicyclists wear helmets.

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“By wearing a helmet themselves, parents and other adults can help ensure children are taught the importance of always wearing a helmet when on a bicycle,” Read said. “Starting the helmet habit with children at an early age increases their chances of wearing helmets when they are older.”

The Department of Health offers the following tips to be safe on the roads this summer:

- Observe the rules of the road.
- Watch for and observe road hazards.
- Avoid riding in the dark but if you must, use reflectors on the front and back of the bike as well as white lights in the front and red reflectors or lights in the back.
- Adjust the bike to fit.
- Check your equipment, inflate tires, and check brakes.
- Be seen by wearing bright colors, neon or florescent clothing. Reflective tape or markings may be used.
- Watch for parked cars.
- Use bike lanes or bike paths whenever available.
- Infants younger than 12 months are too young to sit in a rear bike seat and should not be carried on a bicycle. Do not carry infants in backpacks or front packs on a bike.
- Children who are old enough to sit well unsupported and whose necks are strong enough to support a lightweight helmet (12 months to 4 years) may be carried in a child-trailer or rear-mounted seat.
- Wear a bicycle helmet on every bike ride.
  - Be sure to wear the helmet low on the forehead and flat on your head two finger widths above your eyebrows.
  - Tighten the chin strap and adjust the pads inside the helmet so it feels snug and secure and doesn't move up and down or from side to side.
  - Understand why a helmet is important and relay that information to your family and friends. Encourage others in your environment to wear helmets.
  - Set good example for your children by always wearing helmets.
  - Begin a helmet habit with the first tricycle or bicycle to help it continue as your child grows.
  - Help your child practice putting on the helmet until he or she is able to buckle the straps easily.
  - Because there are different helmets for different sports, check the inside labels to make sure they meet CPSC standards for bike helmets.
  - Remember that a helmet is meant to withstand one crash – after that, it should be replaced.

Spring and summer can be an exciting time to get lots of fresh air and exercise all the while engaging in safe and injury free activity on your bicycle.

For more information about bike safety and how to fit a bike helmet correctly, visit [www.ndhealth.gov/injury](http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury) or contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1).

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